

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-02

PRS-01 SAM-01 /047 W

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4280

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

UNCLAS MANILA 7894

CINCPAC FOR POLAD IMMED

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR, RP, US, ASEAN

SUBJECT: ASST SECRETARY HABIB'S PRESS CONFERENCE IN MANILA

FOLLOWING IS SUBSTANCE OF ASST SEC HABIB'S SESSION WITH
PRESS AT AIRPORT PRIOR DEPARTURE AFTERNOON JUNE 9. COMPLETE
TRANSCRIPT OF Q & A WILL FOLLOW SEPTEL.

1. FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW CORRESPONDENT STOCKWIN
QUESTIONED HABIB ON ALLEGED STATEMENT BY ADAM MALIK THAT
HABIB HAD SAID US BASES IN PHILIPPINES "USELESS". HABIB
ANSWERED FORCEFULLY THAT "I NEVER SAID ANY SUCH THING NOR
DID ADAM MALIK." ASST SEC EMPHASIZED THAT US INTENDS TO
MAINTAIN DEPLOYMENTS IN ASIA AS NECESSARY. CURRENT OR
ANTICIPATED CHANGES IN DEPLOYMENTS IN TAIWAN AND THAILAND
WERE PLANNED SOME TIME AGO. HABIB SAID THERE NO PRESENT
PLAN TO CHANGE PRESENT DEPLOYMENTS. HE EMPHASIZED THIS IS
SOMETHING WHICH HAS BEEN SAID CONSTANTLY BY THE PRESIDENT
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AND THE SECRETARY. THEREFORE HE WAS NOT SAYING ANYTHING

FUNDAMENTALLY NEW.

2. ASAHI SHIMBUN CORRESPONDENT ASKED HABIB WHAT KIND OF ROLE HE EXPECTED JAPAN TO PLAY IN ASIAN REGION. ASST SEC REPLIED JAPAN PLAYS NATURAL ROLE IN ASIA. HE POINTED OUT JAPAN WAS MOST POWERFUL NATION IN AREA ECONOMICALLY. IT WILL PLAY THE ROLE IT WANTS TO PLAY. HABIB NOTED JAPAN WAS ALLY OF U.S. US HAS MUTUAL SECURITY TREATY WITH JAPAN AND US FORCES STATIONED IN JAPAN. HE SAID US EXPECTS JAPAN WILL PLAY CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN TERMS OF CONTRIBUTION TO ASIAN DEVELOPMENT. HE EXPECTED JAPAN WOULD USE ITS WEALTH FOR GOOD AND FOR GROWTH OF REGION. HE NOTED JAPAN HAD ALREADY EXHIBITED WILLINGNESS TO USE ITS WEALTH FOR THE GENERAL REGIONAL WELFARE. HABIB SAID THERE WAS NO EXPECTATION JAPAN WOULD PLAY MAJOR SECURITY ROLE IN AREA. IN FOLLOW UP QUESTION ON JAPAN, CORRESPONDENT ASKED HABIB WHETHER HE EXPECTED JAPAN TO PROVIDE MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO NATIONS OF REGION. HABIB REPLIED THAT QUESTION HAD NOT ARISEN IN ANY REAL SENSE.

3. RADIO PHILIPPINE NETWORK CORRESPONDENT QUIRED ASST SEC ON MEETING WITH PRES. MARCOS. HABIB BEGAN WITH CAVEAT THAT HE NEVER DISCUSSES PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH FOREIGN LEADERS. HE SAID PRESIDENT HAD BEEN VERY GRACIOUS TO GIVE HIM SO MUCH OF HIS TIME ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF HIS LEAVING FOR PEKING FOLLOWING DAY. IN RESPONSE TO QUERY HABIB POINTED OUT THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO "UNDERSTANDING" REACHED WITH PRESIDENT AND EMPHASIZED HE HAD NOT COME TO SETTLE ANYTHING OR DECIDE ANYTHING. HIS PRIMARY CONCERN WAS ACHIEVING A CLEARER PERCEPTION OF ASIAN VIEWS. AS A RESULT OF HIS MEETING WITH PRES. MARCOS, HE HAD PERCEPTION OF GOP VIEWS OF AREA AND HE (HABIB) DID NOT FIND THIS "DISAPPOINTING." HABIB SAID PRES. HAD MADE GOP VIEWS CLEAR ON WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES. HABIB NOTED IT WAS EASY FOR AMERICANS TO TALK TO FILIPINOS SINCE AMERICANS AND FILIPINOS UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER SO WELL. THERE IS A BASIS FOR DISCUSSION ON ALL SUBJECTS. HABIB CONCLUDED ANSWER BY REITERATING THAT NOTHING HAD BEEN DECIDED AND THAT US DECISIONS AFTER ALL MADE BY US PRESIDENT.

4. WASHINGTON POST'S DAVID GREENWAY QUESTIONED HABIB ON EFFECT
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VIETNAM "SET-BACK" HAD HAD ON ASIAN LEADERS HE HAD MET DURING HIS TRIP. HABIB SAID EVENTS IN INDOCHINA HAD COME AS SHOCK TO ASIAN LEADERS BUT IN NO SENSE HAD HE DETECTED HAND-WRINGING OR DESPAIR. HABIB SAID ASIAN LEADERS WERE MUCH MORE RESILIENT THAN THAT. ONCE THE INITIAL SHOCK-WAVE WAS OVER, THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT:

A) US IS NOT LEAVING ASIA

- B) US IS NOT TURNING ISOLATIONIST
- C) US WILL REMAIN TRUE TO ITS COMMITMENTS AND SUSTAIN ITS OBLIGATIONS
- D) US WILL CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THE NATIONS OF ASIA IN A COOPERATIVE SPIRIT.

HABIB SUGGESTED EVENTS IN INDOCHINA HAD CONTRIBUTED TO DEVELOPMENT OF AND SHARPENING OF ASIAN PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR OWN INTERESTS AND NEEDS IN THE REGION. HE BELIEVED ASEAN HAD RECEIVED STIMULUS AS RESULT OF INDOCHINA SETBACK AND NOTED RECENT MEETING OF ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS IN KL, DURING WHICH THERE WAS EVIDENCE OF INCREASED DESIRE FOR COORDINATION AND CONSULTATIONS AMONG ASEAN NATIONS. HABIB SAID THERE WAS A CONSISTENCY BETWEEN THIS INCREASED ASEAN CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE CONTINUITY OF US POLICY. THERE WAS ALSO A CONSISTENCY BETWEEN WHAT THE US AND WHAT ASEAN SEEK FOR THE AREA, I.E., INCREASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL COOPERATION.

5. IN FOLLOW UP QUESTION GREENWAY NOTED THAT WHILE ADMINISTRATION MIGHT BELIEVE IN CONTINUITY AND CONSISTENCY, HE WONDERED WHAT ASIAN LEADERS THOUGHT OF US CONGRESS' ROLE IN FOREIGN POLICY PROCESS AT THIS JUNCTURE. HABIB REPLIED THAT THERE WAS GENERAL AWARENESS IN NATIONS HE VISITED OF RISE IN LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY IN US. HABIB SAID THAT OF COURSE THIS WAS SUBJECT WHICH CAME UP IN HIS DISCUSSIONS. ASST SEC STATED, HOWEVER, THAT HE WAS HOPEFUL THAT WITH VIETNAM BEHIND US, WE COULD REESTABLISH SOME DEGREE OF BI-PARTISANSHIP IN US FOREIGN POLICY. HABIB POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE WITH CONGRESS AND REMARKED ON "SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY IN CONGRESS". HE SAID THERE WOULD ALWAYS BE DIFFERENCES OF OPINION BETWEEN EXEC AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCH ON SOME UNCLASSIFIED

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FOREIGN POLICY QUESTIONS BUT PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD THIS RELATIONSHIP AND VIEWED THESE DIFFERENCES AS CONSTRUCTIVE.

6. NEW YORK TIMES STRINGER ASKED HABIB FOR USG VIEW OF ASEAN ZONE OF NEUTRALITY NOW BEING DISCUSSED IN PEKING. HABIB REPLIED THAT THIS ZONE OF NEUTRALITY HAD BEEN DISCUSSED SPORADICALLY IN ASEAN OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS. THE US HAD NEVER FLATLY OPPOSED IT BUT HAD ALWAYS STATED WE NEEDED MORE DETAILS, FOR EXAMPLE, ON SUCH SUBJECTS AS PASSAGE. HABIB EMPHASIZED US WOULD ALWAYS PAY ATTENTION TO AND CONSIDER VIEWS OF ASEAN AND ASEAN MEMBERS.

7 CBS NEWS STRINGER ASKED ANOTHER QUESTION ON ASEAN ZONE OF NEUTRALITY KEYING IT TO PHASING DOWN OF US DEPLOYMENTS IN THAILAND. HE ASKED ABOUT US BASES IN PHILIPPINES.

HABIB NOTED THAT US BASE PRESENCE IN PHILIPPINES HAD BEEN UP FOR DISCUSSION FOR SOME TIME. IT WAS NOT A NEW SUBJECT AND GOES BACK QUITE A WHILE. THERE HAD BEEN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM MALACANANG THAT DISCUSSION ON BASE QUESTION WAS EXPECTED IN NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE. HABIB SAID HE EXPECTED DISCUSSION ON SPECIFIC ISSUES OF US BASES PRESENCE IN PHILIPPINES SOME TIME THIS YEAR. ACCORDING TO ASST SEC, THERE WAS NO DIFFICULTY ON EITHER US OR PHILIPINE SAID ABOUT THESE DISCUSSIONS. USG WAS HOPEFUL THAT WHEN DISCUSSIONS TOOK PLACE, SOME SOLUTION COULD BE FOUND BY BOTH PARTIES NEGOTIATING IN GOOD FAITH. HABIB SAID BASES QUESTION DID NOT POSE A PROBLEM OF MAGNITUDE AT THIS STAGE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, COLLECTIVE SECURITY, PRESS CONFERENCES, MILITARY BASES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MANILA07894
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750200-0512
From: MANILA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750668/aaaackmw.tel
Line Count: 184
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 MAR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 MAR 2003 by PhilliR0>; APPROVED <04 FEB 2004 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ASST SECRETARY HABIB'S PRESS CONFERENCE IN MANILA FOLLOWING IS SUBSTANCE OF ASST SEC HABIB'S SESSION WITH
TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, MARR, RP, US, ASEAN, (HABIB, PHILIP C)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006